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## **DCR ANNOUNCES PLANS TO CONTROL INVASIVE PLANTS IN LAKE COCHITUATE**

***Submits Notices of Intent to Framingham, Natick, Wayland***

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Town of Framingham Conservation Commission today seeking authorization to combat invasive aquatic species in Lake Cochituate. NOIs will also be filed with Natick on January 19 and Wayland on February 1.

DCR will submit two NOIs for each town: one authorizing herbicide application and one authorizing all other techniques. The NOIs request five-year Orders of Conditions from the towns' respective conservation commissions to carry out a combination of techniques including herbicide application, hand pulling, milfoil weevil (an aquatic insect that feeds on one species of milfoil) demonstration projects, diver-assisted suction harvesting, and re-installation of benthic matting.

"DCR's goal is to halt and reverse the spread of aquatic invasive plants for the purpose of protecting native vegetation and wildlife and preserving the recreational and aesthetic values of the lake," said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington. "We also want to implement a sustainable management plan that will keep the plants in check over the long term."

Three invasive species of aquatic plants were discovered in Lake Cochituate's South Pond in the summer of 2002. This was particularly alarming, as water in Lake Cochituate flows from South Pond to Middle Pond and then on to North Pond. The water flow helps the plants to spread throughout the lake. Though the presence of all three invasive plants is cause for concern, Eurasian milfoil demands particular attention, as it is the most aggressive of the three—it spreads rapidly and out-competes endemic plants, potentially impacting the ecology of the entire lake.

DCR submitted a NOI with the Natick Conservation Commission in April 2003, but the application of herbicides was postponed by several appeals. Non-chemical methods of control commenced in August 2003, but effective control has remained elusive. Further complications arose in early 2005 when concerns surfaced that herbicide use would destroy the habitat of the endangered boreal turrel snail. However, a study found no endangered snail species of any kind in Lake Cochituate.

“I strongly favor adopting a management plan that minimizes—or, if possible, avoids—the use of herbicides,” said Burrington. “Unfortunately, weevils have the potential to control Eurasian milfoil but not the other two invasive plant species found in the lake, and the location and extent of invasive plant growth appears to leave no feasible alternative to an initial application of herbicides.”

All herbicides used in Massachusetts must be registered by the US Environmental Protection Agency after a multi-year process involving around 120 separate studies of the potential environmental and public health impacts. Once the EPA has registered an herbicide for a particular use, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Research and Standards carries out its own review along with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources’ Pesticide Board. Prior to each application, an individual permit must be obtained, and only trained and licensed applicators may dispense the herbicide into the environment. These safeguards provide a wide margin of safety for the Town’s drinking water supply and for people who boat, swim and fish in the lake.

“People have expressed concern about the use of herbicides in Lake Cochituate, particularly regarding drinking water,” said Burrington. “In the case of Natick’s two wellfields along the shore of the lake, for example, the water would be filtered through over 100 feet of soil before entering the wells, which will lock up the herbicides we propose to use. These herbicides will pose no threat to water supplies or public health and have no significant impact on wildlife.”

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